



North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation
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Michael F. Easley
 Governor

January 2005

Volume 19 Number 1

William G. Ross Jr.
 Secretary, DENR

OSP: PAY RANGES NEED REVISION

STUDY COMPARES RANGER SALARIES WITH THOSE IN OTHER STATES

State park rangers in North Carolina are being paid 10-14 percent less than their counterparts in other states when performing the same types of broad duties including law enforcement, according to a study released this month by the Office of State Personnel (OSP).

The pay disparity has made it more difficult to hire and retain good candidates for the demanding jobs, according to managers at the Division of Parks and Recreation.

As a result, the OSP has recommended to the General Assembly that pay classifications for

all division employees with law enforcement certification – rangers, park superintendents, district superintendents and the superintendent of state parks – be revised upward by two pay grades.

If the recommendations are accepted and fully funded, starting pay for new rangers could rise significantly, from \$21,000 to nearly \$27,000 annually, while compensation for most other rangers and superintendents would increase by roughly 10 percent.

The OSP was required to move quickly on the study. It was ordered in a 2004 legislative studies bill last summer with a due date of Jan. 3.

***THIS EDITION OF THE STEWARD
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 PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE***

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GUIDE SHOWCASES HANGING ROCK

For some people around the world, their first impression of North Carolina in 2005 will be the stunning vista from the rocky outcrops of Hanging Rock State Park.

A photograph taken from that vantage point graces the cover of the 2005 Travel Guide distributed by the NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development. About 700,000 copies of the guide are distributed each year to visitors passing through the state and to potential tourists in

NORTH CAROLINA'S TOURISM GUIDE REACHES ABOUT 700,000.

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Department of Environment and Natural Resources

UP CLOSE AND 'PERSONNEL'

Marie Boucher has joined the East District office as interpretation and education specialist. She has a bachelor's degree in biology from Georgetown University and holds a master's degree in conservation, ecology and

environmental management from Duke University. She has worked for the US Army Corps of Engineers and was a ranger at FallsLake State Recreation Area.

Thomas Randolph was hired at Mount Jefferson

State Park as a Park Ranger I. He has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from the University of West Florida and almost three years of work related experience.

Bin Xie joined the staff at the Yorkshire Center as a Computing Consultant I with the ITS Unit. He has a bachelor's degree in applied math from Tsinghua University and more than 18 years of directly related work experience.

Charlene Hofgartner was hired at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area as a Park Ranger II. She has a bachelor's degree in environmental biology from Chowan College and two years experience as a park interpreter and environmental technician.

Susan Ashley was hired at Lake James State Park as a Park Ranger I. She has an associate's degree in fish and wildlife management and a bachelor's degree in communications/marketing. And, she spent five years as general manager of Yadkin Partners.

Brock Martin joined the staff at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area as a Park Ranger II. He has a bachelor's degree in management of recreation facilities and services from East Carolina University and 18 months experience as an assistant park ranger and general utility worker.

Jason Brown was hired at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area as a Park Ranger II. He come to us with a bachelor's degree in natural resource recreation from Virginia Tech University and one year experience as an AmeriCorps member and forestry technician.

From The Director's Desk

It is a serene and contemplative view from Hanging Rock of autumn color stretching away into the haze that graces the cover of North Carolina's 2005 Travel Guide. Officials of the Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development said they wanted to spotlight the scenic beauty of the central part of the state and Hanging Rock State Park came immediately to mind.

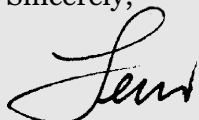
You can find similar impressive scenes in any one of our state parks and recreation areas. If there's one thing we have in abundance, it's those stunning and peaceful views.

That can be deceptive. In 2005, there promises to be plenty of lively activity behind the scenes in the state parks system. We've pledged to do all we can to help address issues of compensation for our law enforcement personnel (rangers and superintendents) in the wake of the Office of State Personnel report that recommends pay grade revisions. Our New Parks for a New Century Initiative is gaining great momentum with new state parks now in the land acquisition stage and fresh possibilities emerging for new parks and state natural areas. We have more than 40 capital projects at some stage of development, including new visitor's centers at Dismal Swamp, South Mountains, New River, Jones Lake and Merchants Millpond.

We're determined to continue to upgrade our radio communications system with the help of the NC Highway Patrol and grant programs of the Department of Homeland Security and the Governor's Crime Commission. And, we're anxious to develop plans and a timeline for a centralized campground reservations system. These are just some of the high points of what promises to be an extremely busy 2005.

Far from being just pretty pictures, those peaceful views from our state parks can serve to keep us inspired and to remind us about what's most important as we tackle some challenging issues this year.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

JIM STEVENS FIRST AMONG 'FRIENDS'

FORMER DIRECTOR GIVEN LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

When it comes to conservation in North Carolina, 82-year-old Jim Stevens, the first director of the Division of Parks and Recreation, may have accomplished enough for several lifetimes.

So, it was very fitting when, on his 82nd birthday in November, Stevens was presented with the first-ever lifetime achievement award from Friends of State Parks. The award was presented by John Graham, who recently succeeded Stevens as president of the organization.

During Stevens' tenure in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the state parks system grew substantially and its administration and operations were refined. New recreation areas at Jordan and Falls lakes and six new state natural areas were created. There were significant expansions at eight state parks (Eno River, Merchants Millpond, Crowders Mountain, Medoc Mountain, Goose Creek, Jockey's Ridge, South Mountains and Lake Waccamaw).

Ruth Sheehan, columnist for The News and Observer of Raleigh wrote, "This is the man who helped rescue Jockey's Ridge, the immense Outer Banks sand dune, from the bulldozers. He kept (William B.) Umstead State Park from being sold to the City of Raleigh and helped line up the land for the Eno River, Fort Fisher and Pilot Mountain state parks. He tried to save Bald Head Island from its future of private development."

His daughter Betsy Brooks told Sheehan, "Essentially what he did was to obtain as much land as he possibly could for new parks. He always said, "If we can snatch the land now, we can develop the parks later."

Stevens moved to North Carolina in 1948 after earning a master's degree from Northwestern University and serving with distinction as a naval



STEVENS, LEFT, GREETED JOHN GRAHAM OF FRIENDS OF STATE PARKS, BEFORE THE CEREMONY.

officer in the Pacific during World War II. He began as an administrator of the old NC Recreation Commission. When that office and the division of state parks were combined in 1978, he became director.

Upon retirement, Stevens became a pillar of the fledgling Friends of State Parks, lobbying tirelessly for the system as a volunteer, meeting with legislators and landowners and coaxing other parks system retirees into joining him.

The award ceremony was held at Brighton Gardens in Raleigh, where Jim has lived since a stroke left him unable to walk. Besides a birthday cake, he was presented a plaque, which reads, "Presented to James S. Stevens in recognition of his life of dedicated service to the State Parks of North Carolina."

His daughter said, "It was always his dream that every family in North Carolina would live less than a half-day's drive from one of the state parks. It was his dream they could all make a day trip to a state park."

NC PADDLE TRAILS ASSOCIATION PLANS SESSIONS

The North Carolina Paddle Trails Association is organizing a six-session videoconference series on "How to Build a Paddle Trail in Your Community."

The effort is aimed at parks and recreation professionals, conservation organizations, tourism officials, wildlife management specialists and economic development organizations.

The fee is \$75 and includes membership in the association as well as a notebook containing contact information and handouts from each session.

The topics and dates are: Introduction, Benefits and Partnerships; Jan. 26; 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.; Planning,

Getting Started, Trail Feasibility Study; Feb. 11; 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.; County Resolutions, Access, Liability and Signage; Feb. 23; 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.; Facilities Construction; March 23; 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.; Management and Monitoring; March 30; 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.; Tourism Marketing and Events; April 8; 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Registration information and site locations can be found on the association's website at <http://ncpaddletrails.org/teleconference.html>.

(Site hosts are being sought for all locations. If you are willing to serve as a site host, email Jim Trask at jan_trask@ncsu.edu.

OSP STUDY

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It has been forwarded to the legislature's Fiscal Research Division and will also be sent to the State Personnel Commission.

"The OSP did a remarkable job in producing a report that was very timely and yet very thorough, said Lewis Ledford, division director. "I think they reached an understanding that pay disparity was putting North Carolina at a real disadvantage in recruiting good rangers."

The study noted that it is difficult to compare the job of park rangers and superintendents with other law enforcement jobs such as police officers and deputies, or even those elsewhere with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, such as marine fisheries and wildlife enforcement officers.

Instead, the OSP went outside North Carolina, notably to state park systems in Maryland, and Missouri, where the duties and requirements of park rangers are somewhat similar, as well as other southeastern states.

"The OSP developed a capsule summary for the Park Ranger II, considered to be the journey level and sent it to survey participants," the study said. "The survey indicated that North Carolina was 10.13 percent behind the market at the salary range minimum and 14.15 percent behind the market at the maximum."

North Carolina began its current program of law enforcement certification for rangers and park superintendents in 1988. Job recruits must complete 16-week



PARK RANGERS IN NORTH CAROLINA HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION AND EDUCATION AS WELL AS LAW ENFORCEMENT.

Basic Law Enforcement Training soon after they are hired, and all rangers and superintendents must undergo annual refresher training and testing to keep certification in much the same way as police officers, deputies and other state law enforcement personnel.

Ranger candidates are required to have at least a two-year degree, normally in a non-law enforcement curriculum, such as park management, natural resource management or biology. Superintendents must have a four-year degree. All must also have certification in fire suppression, medical first response, search and rescue and environmental education.

This prepares them for the very broad scope of a ranger's duties. Beyond enforcing park regulations and investigating criminal acts, they may find themselves teaching a school class, or even schoolteachers about natural resources in the morning, building wildlife habitat in the

afternoon and searching for lost hikers at night.

Chief Ranger Tom Jackson said it now costs the division more than \$15,000 to train and equip a new ranger in the first two years. The division has been frustrated when many of its best recruits then gravitate to other law enforcement jobs or to other states for better pay.

Only a handful of state park systems have such a "multi-specialist" role for park rangers and superintendents, which demands such a broad range of skills and education. The rationale is that such a system makes the most efficient use of manpower in the parks.

Many states and, in most cases, the National Park Service divide rangers into at least two specialties – those responsible for law enforcement, and those with interpretive and/or natural resource duties.

Currently, those in North Carolina are classified as Park Ranger I, II and III. And,

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superintendents have four grade classifications.

The OSP study recommends that Park Ranger I and II be “collapsed” into a new Park Ranger I classification, and that the pay grade for that job should be 64 – four pay grades higher than the current Park Ranger I and two pay grades higher than the current Park Ranger II. (Pay grades determine the minimum and maximum salary for the job.)

The study agreed with the division that the distinction between Park Ranger I and II has eroded over the years as the state parks system has expanded and duties of both classifications have expanded.

“They are now essentially the same job after all the training and some experience. All of these rangers, at some point, are likely to be in charge of operating their parks in the superintendent’s absence,” Ledford said.

The study also recommends that the existing Park Ranger III classification be re-

classified as Park Ranger II with pay grade rising from 64 to 66.

Ledford said that, in coming months, the division will consider how to best reconfigure the existing four superintendent classifications into three.

In its report, the OSP said it is prepared to make the changes in compensation retroactive to Jan. 1 if the changes can be funded. The full cost of funding the recommendations is estimated at \$892,467 for the first year.

Ledford said he is optimistic that the General Assembly and DENR will move to fully fund the OSP recommendations.

“The General Assembly continues to do much in terms of conservation in the state. An important keystone in meeting our mission of protecting these natural resources -- along with environmental education and quality outdoor recreation -- is being able to hire and retain quality staff,” he said.

HANGING ROCK

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other states and foreign countries planning vacation travel.

The cover design was unveiled for the media at a ceremony Dec. 14 at Old Salem in Forsyth County. Division Director Lewis Ledford and Hanging Rock Superintendent Erik Nygard attended.

Chip Bremer, publications director for the state’s tourism division, said a locale for the cover shot is chosen from the mountains, heartland and coast on a rotating basis, and Hanging Rock was an easy choice to represent the heartland region this year.

“It all comes down to promoting one of the strengths that we have, and that’s the state’s scenic beauty,” Bremer said. “When ideas started coming up about what could showcase the natural beauty of the region, one idea that stuck out was the state parks.”

The Hanging Rock image was one of about a dozen finalists that the tourism division considered for the cover, Bremer said, and it was a particular favorite of the division’s executive director, Lynn Minges.

Bremer said that, for the cover image, the publishers seek “something that moves people to want to come to North Carolina, to say ‘Wow, I can see this with my own eyes.’”

The photograph was taken in late October and shows a panorama of autumn color in the Piedmont under a brilliant blue sky.

During the unveiling ceremony, Ledford told the guests that Hanging Rock is one of North Carolina’s oldest parks, much of it having been constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. And, it has remained one of the most popular, with more than 400,000 visitors each year.

“In many people’s minds, Hanging Rock has become the mental image of what a proper state park in North Carolina should be. Indeed, in this part of the state, “Hanging Rock” and “state park” have become nearly synonymous,” Ledford said.

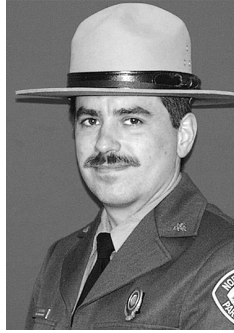
“This honor – to represent North Carolina on such an important publication, to be seen by so many inside and outside the state’s borders – is further testament to Hanging Rock State Park’s place as an icon of our rich natural resource heritage.”

Bremer said that some version of the travel guide has been printed each year since the 1950s, and its current format has been used for more than 10 years. The printing of the publication is offset by advertising at no cost to the state, he said.

KERSHNER WILL LEAD FALLS LAKE SRA

Scott Kershner, formerly superintendent of Goose Creek State Park, has been named superintendent of Falls Lake State Recreation Area. Kershner succeeds Bryan Dowdy who accepted a job as law enforcement specialist.

The popular park on the US Army Corps of Engineers reservoir near Raleigh draws about one million visitors each year to its seven recreation sites covering more than 5,000 acres.



A native of Pennsylvania, Kershner grew up in Ontario, Canada, and earned a bachelor's degree in environmental studies at the University of Waterloo in Ontario. Kershner worked for two park agencies in that region before joining North Carolina's state parks system in 1994 as a Ranger II at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area.

In 1996, Kershner began a 7 1/2-year tenure at Goose Creek State Park as Superintendent I and

Superintendent II. The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the park's environmental education center was held on his first day at that job.

Kershner is a certified environmental educator, a certified prescribed burn boss and a firearms instructor for the division.

"Scott lead Goose Creek and its environmental education center into a first-rate state park," said Division Director Lewis Ledford. "I'm confident he will bring the same vision and professionalism to Falls Lake, which presents a different set of challenges. His management abilities and broad range of experience will serve him well."

Kershner said he is looking forward to again dealing with the challenges that come with the operations of a large, multi-use recreation area.

"With the help of Superintendent Eric Dousharm, I hope to get the natural resource programs re-energized, and to give attention to other priorities of our state parks such as environmental enhancement and protection and interpretive programming," he said.

SEA CREATURES HELP SANTA AT COAST

At Hammocks Beach State Park, Santa's sleigh may well be pulled by dolphins.

The marine creatures and shore birds were largely responsible for a huge donation to the Toys for Tots campaign held annually by the U.S. Marine Corps.

Hammocks Beach rangers Sam Bland and Kevin Bleck arranged a series of weekend boat cruises through the estuary that lies between the park's visitor's center and Bear Island's beaches. The fare for each visitor was at least one new donated toy.

By the end of the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, the park had collected about 150 toys. They made quite an impressive display in the visitor's center before marines from Camp Lejeune carried them away, Bland said.

"It worked out real well and the marines were very happy and eager for us to do it again next year," he said.

The two rangers conducted nine cruises over six weekends leading up to Thanksgiving weekend. Billed as "marsh cruises," the programs were a slight departure from the park's normal interpretive and education programs.

Using one of the park's ferries – that are filled with beachgoers visiting Bear Island in hot

weather months – the rangers cruised through the estuary scouting bird and marine life. They skirted the environmentally significant Huggins Island and talked to visitors about the area's cultural history as well as natural history.

Dolphins made an appearance on nearly every 90-minute cruise, and were the most popular attraction, by far, Bland said.

Reservations were required for the marsh cruises and most were filled to capacity. There was a strong demand on Thanksgiving weekend, Bland said, and next year's plans may include more or larger Thanksgiving cruises. "That weekend, the weather wasn't great but we still had a good turnout," he said.

The visitors primarily came from nearby coastal and Down East communities such as Southport, New Bern and Greenville. There was a nice mix of families and retirees, he said, and most were happy to learn something about the area's natural history that was not strictly beach-oriented.

This was the first year for the event, Bland said. "We tried last year and couldn't connect with the coordinator at Camp Lejeune. This year, we got a little earlier start to make sure we could get it done."

North Carolina State Parks

Monthly Attendance Report, Nov. 2004

PARK	NOVEMBER 2004	TOTAL YTD NOV. 2004	NOVEMBER 2003	TOTAL YTD NOV. 2003	% CHANGE (2003/2004)	
					NOV.	YTD
Carolina Beach	9,161	211,306	16,111	242,660	-43%	-13%
Cliffs of the Neuse	5,469	118,826	6,515	114,217	-16%	4%
Crowder's Mountain	27,477	345,106	26,874	216,665	2%	59%
Eno River	22,232	282,648	23,342	265,303	-5%	7%
Occoneechee Mountain	3,560	38,295	3,073	28,545	16%	34%
Falls Lake	18,608	677,196	18,772	654,910	-1%	3%
Fort Fisher	31,988	718,746	27,840	712,391	15%	1%
Fort Macon	58,782	1,261,752	67,290	1,227,378	-13%	3%
Goose Creek	10,861	133,293	10,653	117,771	2%	13%
Gorges	7,013	130,339	4,397	86,026	59%	52%
Hammocks Beach	6,666	129,099	6,411	144,003	4%	-10%
Hanging Rock	22,342	318,740	23,364	355,650	-4%	-10%
Jockey's Ridge	35,073	855,042	35,906	1,014,419	-2%	-16%
Jones Lake	4,888	96,030	5,812	114,962	-16%	-16%
Jordan Lake	27,480	923,414	20,366	731,680	35%	26%
Kerr Lake	55,380	1,459,792	58,312	1,225,452	-5%	19%
Lake James	44,383	409,619	12,509	240,621	255%	70%
Lake Norman	25,653	425,457	29,286	360,682	-12%	18%
Lake Waccamaw	4,836	90,056	4,212	85,238	15%	6%
Lumber River	3,990	61,212	4,708	49,244	-15%	24%
Medoc Mountain	3,122	54,922	3,780	44,052	-17%	25%
Merchant's Millpond	13,946	189,258	3,091	136,231	351%	39%
Morrow Mountain	13,400	254,020	20,400	251,548	-34%	1%
Mount Jefferson	6,024	90,297	6,731	94,930	-11%	-5%
Mount Mitchell	14,900	430,949	39,922	670,179	-63%	-36%
New River	5,567	156,769	8,227	154,053	-32%	2%
Pettigrew	3,022	72,752	4,613	80,903	-34%	-10%
Pilot Mountain	24,468	368,908	48,106	396,871	-49%	-7%
Raven Rock	9,342	97,006	11,619	104,163	-20%	-7%
Singletary Lake	2,364	35,385	455	21,167	420%	67%
South Mountains	0	49,194	13,966	175,908	-100%	-72%
Stone Mountain	23,324	408,004	25,677	361,989	-9%	13%
Weymouth Woods	3,453	41,360	4,039	31,610	-15%	31%
William B. Umstead	24,970	454,992	36,824	398,006	-32%	14%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	573,744	11,389,784	633,203	10,909,427	-9%	4%

Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

and

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

SAFETY ZONE **Put Safety Into Action**

✓Be aware of the five ergonomics risk factors: repetition, forceful exertions, awkward posture, contact stress and vibration.

✓Take periodic short breaks for intense key-board work or other repetitive tasks.

✓Consult your doctor if you develop persistent pain, swelling or stiffness, especially in the hands, feet, legs, neck or back.



The Steward

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